sequence is from a Hepatitis A virus, said method comprising the step of administering to a cell *in vitro* said nucleic acid encoding a sequence that is complementary to at least a portion of said IRES, wherein the ability of said nucleic acid to inhibit translation of said viral nucleic acid sequence is detected by:

(a) contacting said nucleic acid with a reporter gene construct having the following elements operably linked: a replication origin, a promoter, a reporter gene, and said IRES, under conditions where said reporter gene is translated;

(b) measuring the level of the translation product of said reporter gene; and

(c) comparing said level of said translation product in (b) to the level of translation product synthesized by the reporter gene construct under the conditions of (a) but in the absence of said nucleic acid, thereby detecting said nucleic acid capable of inhibiting translation of said nucleic acid sequence.

8. The method of claim 3, wherein said nucleic acid fragment complementary to at least a portion of said IRES is an oligonucleotide comprising a purine tract of about 4 to 12 nucleotides.

9. The method of claim 3, wherein said nucleic acid fragment complementary to at least a portion of said IRES is an oligonucleotide comprising a purine tract of about 5 to 9 nucleotides.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said oligonucleotide further comprises a CAT nucleotide triplet.

17. Cancel

18. (Allowed) A composition comprising a nucleic acid encoding a sequence that is complementary to at least a portion of a Hepatitis A virus IRES which contains a YX AUG sequence, wherein the nucleic acid is present in an amount effective for inhibiting viral replication, and wherein Y is a pyrimidine tract between 4 to 12 nucleotides, wherein X is a random spacer sequence of between 5 to 30 nucleotides.